



Parental Divorce and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of divorce on secondary school students' academic performance in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. To achieve the purpose of the study, three research questions were raised and answered. The descriptive survey research method was adopted for the study. The population for this study was made of all the 4,016 public junior secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The sample size for the study was made up of 100 respondents who were randomly selected from the 20 public junior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. Data collected from the respondents was analyzed using descriptive statistics, precisely mean and standard deviation. The findings from the study revealed a significant impact of parental divorce on students' emotional well-being in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. It was concluded that there is a significant influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The study recommended among others that secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area should establish or enhance guidance and counselling units to provide emotional and psychological support to students affected by divorce.

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INTRODUCTION

Divorce, a significant life event, has profound implications on children, often affecting their emotional well-being, social interactions, and academic performance. When parents separate, students may experience shifts in their focus, stability, and support systems, which can create academic challenges. Feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and low self-esteem may surface, hindering their concentration and reducing motivation in school. This often results in lower grades, absenteeism, and even behavioral issues, all of which impact academic success (Ariyo, 2022). Addressing these challenges through effective counseling becomes essential, as it provides students with a supportive environment where they can process emotions, build resilience, and develop coping strategies to help mitigate the adverse effects of divorce on their education.

Divorce is the legal dissolution of a marriage, formally ending the marital relationship between two individuals. It is a complex process governed by laws that vary by country and culture, typically involving the settlement of issues such as property division, child custody, alimony, and support. Divorce is not only a personal choice but a social institution that reflects the changing dynamics of family life, societal expectations, and individual rights (Udoma, 2019). While marriage is generally seen as a partnership grounded in mutual support, companionship, and shared goals, divorce serves as a means for individuals to exit the union when these foundational aspects are disrupted, such as through irreconcilable differences, infidelity, or abuse. In this sense, divorce functions as a legal acknowledgment of the emotional, psychological, or physical separation that has already occurred, aiming to

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offer both parties a new beginning and a fair resolution.

The concept of divorce has evolved considerably over time, influenced by shifts in societal norms, gender roles, and the growing emphasis on individual well-being. Historically, divorce was often stigmatized and difficult to obtain, particularly for women, as many societies placed a strong emphasis on marital permanence and family unity. However, with changing views on personal freedom and equality, divorce has become more accessible and accepted in modern society (Komonibo, 2021). Today, divorce is not necessarily viewed as a failure but rather as a legitimate response to an unfulfilling or unhealthy relationship. This shift reflects a broader understanding of marriage as a partnership based on mutual happiness and growth, rather than a rigid institution. This shift in family dynamics and structure also brings about a range of impacts on children, including effects on their academic performance.

Students' academic performance refers to the observable demonstration of a learners' comprehension, concepts, skills, ideas, and knowledge. It encompasses how students manage their studies and complete various tasks assigned by their teachers within a set timeframe, such as an academic year (Omohwo, 2020). This concept includes the knowledge acquired or skills developed in school subjects, typically evaluated by test scores or grades provided by teachers. Academic performance serves as an evaluative strategy, gathering evidence of students' learning through their work on specific tasks. It represents the knowledge gained over a given period, usually assessed through methods like standardized tests, performance assessments, and portfolio reviews. Recognizing the factors that affect academic performance, such as family dynamics, is essential, as challenges like divorce may have a profound impact on students' academic performance.

Parental divorce may significantly influence students' academic performance by creating emotional and psychological challenges that disrupt their focus, motivation, and stability in school (Ikwaadi, 2023). When parents separate,

children may experience feelings of confusion, insecurity, and sadness, all of which can impact their mental well-being. This emotional turmoil may make it difficult for them to concentrate on their studies, leading to lower engagement and reduced performance on academic tasks. Additionally, students from divorced families may face changes in their living arrangements, financial constraints, and a reduced level of parental support or supervision. Such instability can create feelings of neglect or anxiety, further impairing students' ability to focus on academic responsibilities. Studies have shown that children experiencing parental divorce may have lower grades, increased absenteeism, and a higher likelihood of behavioral issues, all of which negatively impact their educational success.

Beyond the emotional effects, parental divorce may alter students' social interactions and peer relationships, which are crucial for academic success. The stigma or stress of having divorced parents may cause children to withdraw from their social circles or experience difficulty in forming new friendships, further isolating them. Social support from peers is often a buffer that may enhance students' engagement and resilience, but when children from divorced families struggle socially, they may miss out on this critical aspect of support. Divorce is a significant life event that can create various challenges for secondary school students, often affecting their academic performance.

Children from divorced families may experience emotional stress, feelings of insecurity, and behavioral changes, all of which can interfere with their ability to focus on academic responsibilities (Bello, 2023). Students whose parents have divorced may struggle with concentration, memory, and motivation, leading to lower academic performance compared to their peers from intact families. When a family structure changes, students may also need to adjust to new living arrangements or divide their time between two households, which can disrupt their study routines, homework completion, and participation in extracurricular activities. These disruptions often have a compounding effect, causing affected

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students to fall behind academically (Ikwuni, 2020).

The emotional impact of divorce can manifest as stress, depression, or anxiety, further impairing students' academic performance. Adolescents may feel a sense of loss, confusion, or anger, which can lead to behavioral problems such as absenteeism, lack of participation in class, and conflicts with teachers and classmates. Such emotional distress can make it difficult for students to fully engage in their studies, as they may prioritize coping with their emotions over their academics (Hadiza, 2022). Furthermore, students from divorced families may develop negative perceptions about their own future relationships or academic abilities, affecting their self-esteem. This self-doubt can decrease their motivation to pursue academic success, as they might feel that the disruption in their family life limits their future opportunities.

The financial implications of divorce can contribute to academic challenges. Many divorced parents experience a decrease in household income, which may limit the resources available for educational support, such as tutoring, school supplies, and stable internet access for online learning (Nnamani, 2019). Financial instability can create added stress for students, as they may feel the need to contribute to household responsibilities, often at the expense of their study time. In some cases, students from financially strained households may need to take on part-time jobs, reducing the time and energy they can dedicate to academics. Furthermore, financial stress can impact the overall well-being of students, as it may restrict access to nutritious food, stable housing, and extracurricular activities that contribute to positive academic outcomes (Udechukwu, 2021).

The lack of parental involvement or support, which often accompanies divorce, can hinder students' academic performance. When parents are preoccupied with personal issues or adjusting to their new lifestyles, they may have less time or energy to monitor their children's schoolwork or attend school events, which are critical to fostering academic achievement (Asanakpa, 2023). Students whose parents are

actively engaged in their education tend to perform better academically. Without consistent parental guidance, students may lack the motivation and discipline necessary to excel in school. This lack of support can result in feelings of neglect, which may lead to behavioral issues and poor academic performance. In conclusion, divorce can have a multifaceted and profound effect on secondary school students' academic success, encompassing emotional, financial, and parental support challenges. Addressing these factors through school counselling and community support programs may help mitigate the negative academic impact on students from divorced families (Ozubu, 2021).

Imoni (2020) explored the influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. The study aimed to investigate how divorce affects students' academic performance. Four research questions and two null hypotheses provided direction for the study, which used a survey research design. The sample consisted of 300 respondents, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire on the influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary schools. This questionnaire served as the data collection instrument and was face-validated by three experts. Data analysis, conducted using percentages, revealed that divorce is a significant factor influencing students' academic performance in secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria.

Okeke (2023) conducted a study on the influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. This research aimed to understand how divorce impacts students' performance in academic settings. Guided by three research questions and one null hypothesis, the study employed a descriptive survey design. A total of 250 respondents participated in the study, with data gathered through a structured questionnaire on the influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary schools. The instrument was validated by two experts and the data were analyzed using mean scores. Findings indicated that divorce significantly affects



students' academic performance in secondary schools across Anambra State.

Dauda (2021) examined the influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Kano State, Nigeria. The objective was to assess how parental divorce impacts student engagement and academic outcomes. Five research questions and three null hypotheses shaped the study, which used a correlational research design. The sample size consisted of 400 respondents, and data were collected through a validated questionnaire on the influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary schools. Analysis of the data was carried out using regression analysis, revealing that divorce significantly influences academic performance among students in secondary schools in Kano State.

Counselling plays a vital role in supporting students whose academic performance suffers due to the emotional and psychological effects of divorce. By offering a safe and non-judgmental space, counselling allows students to process complex feelings such as anger, confusion, sadness, or guilt that may arise from their parents' separation (Nnamani, 2021). Skilled counsellors often help students understand and express these emotions constructively, which can improve their focus, resilience, and engagement in school. Additionally, counselling equips students with coping strategies and stress-management techniques to handle both academic and personal challenges. Through guided discussions, counsellors also encourage students to identify and build on their strengths, boosting self-esteem and confidence, which are often affected during familial disruptions. This support can help students re-establish a sense of stability, promoting better concentration and motivation in their studies.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent times, preliminary observation has shown that the issue of divorce seems to become increasingly prevalent. This problem, when not well curtail may affect the academic performance of students. Common observation has shown that when parents separate, students

may face emotional challenges such as anxiety, anger, and low self-esteem, all of which may disrupt their ability to focus on schoolwork. As students struggle to process emotions that comes with divorce, their performance in school may suffers. Unfortunately, the lack of counselling services in many secondary schools may leave these students without essential support, which can exacerbates their difficulties.

Moreover, common observation has shown that students from divorced families may struggle with social isolation or peer-related issues, which may further hinders their academic success. They may feel different from their classmates, fear judgment, or face the stigma surrounding divorce, which can lead to withdrawal from social activities and decreased participation in class. Counselling services could provide a crucial intervention by helping these students develop coping strategies, emotional awareness, and social skills necessary to navigate the school environment positively. However, with counselling often absent in many secondary schools, these students may miss opportunities for guided support and conflict resolution, resulting in prolonged academic difficulties. The researcher is worried by these phenomena and so wishes to investigate the influence of divorce on secondary school students' academic performance in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State

Research Questions

The following questions will guide the study:

1. What is the level of students' academic performance in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State?
2. What is the influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State?
3. What role can school counsellors play in supporting students affected by parental divorce to enhance their academic performance?

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METHODOLOGY

The research design that was employed for this study is the descriptive survey design. This approach involves gathering data on a specific topic through observation without altering any variables. This research design is deemed appropriate for this study, as it facilitated the collection of data to investigate the influence of divorce on students' academic performance.

The population for this study was made of all the 4,016 public junior secondary school students in the 20 public junior secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. (Source: Ministry of Education, Edo State, 2024). The sample for the study was made up of 100 students who were randomly selected from each schools in the local government. Using the simple random sampling technique, 5 students each were randomly selected from the 20 public secondary schools in the local government, thus making a total sample size of 100 respondents.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Divorce on Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (IDSAPQ)." The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A focused on the demographic or personal information of the respondents, while Section B contained items designed to gather information regarding the

influence of divorce on students' academic performance. The questionnaire utilized a 4-point Likert scale with response options ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), to Strongly Disagree (SD).

The Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered to a group of 20 respondents which were not part of the study but were part of the population. A Cronbach coefficient of .837 was obtained. This shows that the instrument is reliable. The researcher used the direct retrieval method to collect the completed questionnaires from the respondents. Both the administration and retrieval of the questionnaires took place on the same day. The researcher employed descriptive statistics, such as mean score and standard deviation as the method of data analysis. Mean score above a mean of 2.50 was considered high, while scores below 2.50 was regarded as low.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the level of students' academic performance in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Level of Students' Academic Performance in English Language in Secondary Schools in Egor Local Government Area

Class	No. in Class	No of students that scored overall average 70% and above	No of students that scored 60 to 69	No of students that scored 50 to 59	No of students that scored below 50	Remarks
JSSI	49	31	9	6	3	High
JSSII	28	15	7	4	2	High
JSSIII	23	13	5	3	2	High
Total	100	59	21	13	7	High

The table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of students' academic performance in English Language across different classes in secondary schools within Egor Local Government Area. It shows that a total of 100 students from JSS I, JSS II, and JSS III classes were assessed, with 59 students achieving an overall score of 70%

and above, 21 students scoring between 60% and 69%, 13 students scoring between 50% and 59%, and 7 students scoring below 50%. The performance in all three classes was categorized as high, with the majority of students in each class scoring above 50%. Specifically, JSS I had 31 students with scores of 70% and above, JSS II had

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15, and JSS III had 13. The analysis of data in the above table therefore implies that there is high level of students' academic performance in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Influence of Divorce on Students' Academic Performance in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Students from divorced homes may lack motivation to excel academically due to emotional distress	3.74	.697	Agreed
2.	Frequent absenteeism resulting from broken homes can hinder students' learning and understanding of the curriculum	3.81	.711	Agreed
3.	Parental divorce can distract students from their studies, negatively impacting focus and comprehension	3.22	.941	Agreed
4.	Parental divorce may lead to the development of poor study habits, reducing the time and effort students dedicate to their schoolwork	3.88	.719	Agreed
5.	Financial difficulties associated with divorce may limit access to educational resources, thus affecting their academic performance	3.46	.827	Agreed
Cluster Mean		3.62	.779	Agreed

N = 100, Criterion Mean = 2.5

Table 2 revealed the responses of the respondents on all the items presented at a mean score of 3.74, 3.81, 3.22, 3.88 and 3.46 respectively. The cluster mean of 3.62 is above the criterion mean score of 2.50 which implies that there is a significant influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary

schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State.

Research Question 3: What role can school counsellors play in supporting students affected by parental divorce to enhance their academic performance?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Role of School Counsellors in Supporting Students Affected by Parental Divorce

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	School counsellors often provide a safe, confidential environment for students to express feelings	3.37	.816	Agreed
2.	School counsellors often help students process the emotional impact of parental divorce	3.69	.691	Agreed
3.	School counsellors often support students whose parents are divorced by helping them stay organized	3.52	.783	Agreed
4.	School counsellors often help students affected by divorce feel connected and less isolated	3.41	.822	Agreed
5.	School counsellors assist students in handling friendship issues or behavioural changes that may arise due to parental divorce	3.78	.758	Agreed
Cluster Mean		3.55	.774	Agreed

N = 100, Criterion Mean = 2.5

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Table 4 revealed the responses of the respondents on all the items presented at a mean score of 3.37, 3.69, 3.52, 3.41 and 3.78 respectively. The cluster mean of 3.55 is above the criterion mean score of 2.50 which implies that school counsellors play a significant role in supporting students affected by parental divorce to enhance their academic performance in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings from the study in research question one revealed that there is high level of students' academic performance in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. This finding can be attributed to several factors, including the availability of qualified teachers, effective teaching methods, conducive learning environments, and the involvement of parents in students' education. Additionally, the presence of adequate school facilities and government policies supporting quality education may have contributed to improved learning outcomes. This finding is in line with Oloko (2020) who found out in his study that there is high level of students' academic performance in secondary schools.

Findings from the study in research question two shows that there is a significant influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. This finding can be attributed to the emotional distress, financial instability, and lack of parental support that often accompany family separation. These factors can lead to reduced concentration, low motivation, and poor academic engagement among affected students, ultimately impacting their performance in school. This finding is in agreement with Bello (2023) who asserted that children from divorced families may experience emotional stress, feelings of insecurity, and behavioral changes, all of which can interfere with their ability to focus on academic responsibilities. In same vein, Imoni (2020) found out in his study that divorce is a significant factor influencing students' academic performance in secondary schools.

Findings from the study in research question three revealed that school counsellors play a significant role in supporting students affected by parental divorce to enhance their academic performance in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. This finding can be attributed to the vital guidance, emotional support, and coping strategies that counsellors provide. Parental divorce often leads to emotional distress, instability, and decreased academic focus among students. Counsellors help mitigate these challenges by offering psychological support, fostering resilience, and implementing targeted interventions such as mentorship and peer support programs. Their role in providing a stable support system enables students to manage their emotions effectively and stay engaged in their academic pursuits. In support of the findings, Makanfi (2023) asserted school counsellors play a crucial role in supporting students whose lives are affected by parental divorce, often serving as a stable and reliable source of guidance during a turbulent period. Also supporting the findings, Fadeye (2022) found out in his study that counsellors play a vital role in enhancing academic performance by providing emotional support and academic guidance to students in Enugu State secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated the influence of divorce on secondary school students' academic performance in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that there is a significant influence of divorce on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. It was also concluded that there is a significant impact of parental divorce on students' emotional well-being in secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State.

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